

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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BROWNIE'S PLOT.

A SERIAL STORY.

By the Author of "Lucy Carter."

CHAPTER XXIII. TOO LATE.

ANDERSON was for going at once to seek an interview with Mrs. Northcott; but Maud raised an objection. She begged him to wait until Friday was over, adding:

"I look forward to that evening with double anxiety now."

"So do I. With anxiety as to your cousin's power to bear up against the blow which awaits her," answered Anderson.

"Don't you think it possible she may be right, Andrew?" persisted Maud. "I have tried, lately, to hope she may be."

"I say nothing about her theory of the crime, Maud," was his reply; "but of this I feel convinced. She has nothing to hope from mesmerism. Margaret—I suppose I may call her Margaret now, you won't misunderstand me any more, will you?" he asked with a smiling glance at her happy face—"your cousin, hopes to obtain a confession from Litton while he is in a hypnotic trance. That, I am certain, is impossible."

They walked together as far as Mr. Staite's shop, which they reached at half-past one.

"Clement will be half mad with joy," she said as she bade Anderson good-bye. For now it appeared to Maud that there could be no conceivable obstacle to Clement's happiness. Brownie's schemes might be successful or unsuccessful; but she loved Clement, and he returned her love. Brownie believed in his innocence. She had a little money, so had Clement; they might join their fortunes, and, content

with the opinion of one another, despise that of everybody else. There was a large world even beyond the limits of Middleton.

"I want to see my brother, Mr. Staite," said Maud, entering the shop to avoid delay at the private door.

"Mr. Clement went away an hour ago," was the answer.

"Mr. Clement went away!" she repeated.

"Do you know where he went?"

"He's gone daft, in my opinion," answered Mr. Staite. "He came home yesterday, looking as fresh as paint; you wouldn't have believed he'd been ill. Then, as the day wore on, he grows restless like, and all the blessed night I heard him a-pacing over my head, as couldn't get a wink. He wouldn't take no breakfast, for all Mrs. Hess coaxed him like a mother, as she is of a baker's dozen, miss. His eyes was as black as rifle-butts, and, says he: 'I can't stand this d—d place any longer.' D—d was his word and hasty his manner."

"Yes, yes; but can't you tell me where he went to?" pleaded Maud.

"I'm a-coming to that," continued Staite. "'You don't mean as you're going for good?' says the missus. 'I do,' says he; and he pitches some things into his port-manteau, and sends the boy for a fly, and away he goes."

"Did he go to the station?" enquired Maud, picturing poor Brownie's disappointment.

"I'm a-coming to that," Mr. Staite slowly assured her. "'Station, sir?' says I, as he gets into the fly. 'Yes,' says he; 'but drive to Mrs. Oliver's first—the Nook, and away he drove.'"

Maud was powerless. She could not go after him to the Nook; and, indeed, by this time it was probable that Clement had

left Middleton. She remembered the enigmatical words she had heard from Mrs. Oliver; their meaning seemed now only too painfully distinct. Mrs. Oliver had evidently formed a resolution to take some decisive action, and, although Maud entertained a high opinion of her late hostess, it was impossible, at a time like this, to ignore all that scandalous tongues had hinted any time during the past year.

And yet, Maud asked herself, if Clement loved his cousin—and she had heard that he did love her on unimpeachable authority only that morning—how could there be the remotest cause for alarm so far as Mrs. Oliver and he were concerned?

Her knowledge of Clement's character compelled her answer. Her brother had been desperate and hopeless. She, herself, in her ignorance, had added to his despair. She knew how reckless and impulsive he was; and by the time she arrived at home had no doubt whatever that Clement had committed himself past redemption.

"Poor Brownie!" she murmured, as she entered the house, "if we had only walked straight to Mr. Staite's instead of lingering——"

Then sweet thoughts returned to her; and her mind was a strange confusion of misery and happiness.

"Where is Brownie, mother?" she enquired, seeing Mrs. Northcott waiting for the rest to join her at luncheon.

"Don't ask me, Maud. I have quite enough to annoy me without Margaret," was the irritable answer. "There's your uncle—gone away again. Coming in at two o'clock this morning, for all that he knows what a light sleeper I am; then going out before anybody is down. Of course, he went to Mrs. Oliver's. Every one seems mad about Mrs. Oliver."

"I thought you said he had gone to London, mother."

"So he has, Maud; or so he says. I cannot understand your uncle. He came back from Mrs. Oliver's at eleven o'clock, packed his bag, and sent for a fly. 'I'm off to London,' he said; and you might have knocked me down with a feather."

"Do you think he intends to return for Friday, mother?" asked Maud, as she removed her hat.

"How can I tell!" was the reply. "Margaret may know; I don't. I only know this: the boy carried his bag to the fly, and heard him tell the man to drive to the Nook. Mark my words,

Maud; that woman is leading my poor brother astray; I am sure of it."

Maud was bewildered; she might have been listening to a repetition of Mr. Staite's tale of Clement's proceedings. Her brother and Mr. Litton must have reached the Nook almost at the same time. Each carried a portmanteau, each had expressed his intention of taking the train to London. Maud could make neither head nor tail of it.

"Poor Brownie!" had been the burden of her cousin's lament; but surely never did a girl appear to need pity less.

"Uncle Walter is off again, Maud. I expect he has a season ticket, and is afraid of not getting fair value for his money."

"I will not allow such goings on from my house!" declared Mrs. Northcott, whose excitement had reached boiling point, and continually bubbled over with exclamations of this kind.

"He won't trouble it much longer," whispered Brownie, for the sole benefit of Maud.

"You think uncle will return before Friday?" enquired Maud, whose new happiness would not allow her to look entirely dismal.

Brownie laughed her reply:

"Doubt that the stars are fire,
Doubt that the sun doth move,
Doubt truth to be a liar,
But never doubt—"

that Uncle Walter will be here on the Fifth, Maudie."

After luncheon, Maud led Brownie to her own room. All the morning's coldness and lack of cordiality had disappeared; she could no longer accuse Brownie of coldness to Clement; whilst for her cousin's part, ten minutes was the utmost extent of her vexation.

"Brownie," began Maud, after fidgeting about the room for some time, "I have a piece of news that will surprise you——"

"My darling," was the astonishing answer, "I know all about it. I wondered whether you were going to tell me. What a trial it was to hold my tongue during luncheon! I am so glad, Maudie! I do congratulate him, and you too."

"However did you know, Brownie? Nobody had any idea—not a soul."

Brownie's answer was a peal of happy laughter.

"The cheque, Maud! Besides, everybody in Middleton knows it by this time—since you walked along the High Street together. I saw you, although you were

both too deeply engrossed to notice poor me. I shall have to call him Andrew now; how odd! Clement guessed it, too, Maudie; he told me so. Do you know, I really do intend that he shall be actually here—in this very house, before my birthday is over."

"You do make so sure about it all," exclaimed Maud, placing her arm about her cousin's waist.

"Of course I do. I have not one single doubt now. I am anxious for it to be over, so anxious; but I know I shall succeed. Oh, I know I must! You will see. I have arranged every single detail—every one. And when I—when it is all over—open sesame! and in will walk Clement. I can see him now; can't you, Maud? I can see him coming into the room, looking so careless and proud—just as he used to look. You will see them all then! How they will press round, each struggling to be the first to take his hand. Ah, they will be sorry then—yes, they will—sorry they have so bitterly wronged him. They won't be able to say enough. And you know Clement's way—dear old Clement: 'Oh, never mind, my dear fellow;'—I can hear him say it—'it's nothing,' he will say—'nothing at all.' And then he will toss back his hair, just as he does, you know, and go on talking about something else, just as if nothing had happened since he was here last. I can picture it all. And, Maudie—you shall help me, and Mr. Anderson, too— Maud! Maud! what is the matter?"

Maud was staring at her aghast, yet not daring to interrupt.

Brownie was intoxicated with her hopes, carried away by her enthusiasm; it seemed so hard a blow to deal—a blow which must make Brownie bite the dust, which must brush away her brightness for ever, dim the light of her eyes, and crush the faith that was in her.

"Brownie, Brownie, he has gone!" she cried, at last, looking pleadingly into her cousin's face, as though to implore her to be calm. "He has gone, Brownie."

"Yes, I know," was the answer. "But he will come back; there is no fear. I will tell you a secret, Maudie: I have bribed him."

"You will not understand," said Maud, reduced almost to desperation. "Clement, Brownie—it is Clement who has gone."

Brownie's only answer was a confident toss of the head.

"But, darling, I was at Mr. Staite's

before luncheon. Clement went away this morning. He has gone for—*for ever*."

Sinking helplessly into a chair, Brownie stared blankly before her. It was difficult to realise the full meaning of Maud's words.

"Clement gone!" she exclaimed.

"It is true, dear. And, Brownie, it was I who helped to drive him away. I was so blind," she continued, dropping on her knees by her cousin's side, and looking pityingly into the pale face. "I did not know then. You were so much together—you and Andrew, I mean. I knew that he wrote to you, and when you told me about Clement, I thought you meant him—Andrew. So did Clement, darling. It has been a miserable mistake all along. Clement thought so too."

"Thought what, Maud?" Brownie moaned. "Don't torture me. Tell me, quickly, for pity's sake. What did Clement think?"

"That you—that you—that it was Mr. Anderson—Andrew——"

"The idea!" exclaimed Brownie. "How could any one be so absurd!"

The absurdity was not quite so evident to Maud, however, as it appeared to her cousin.

"I had no thought of it until Clement spoke to me a few days ago," continued Maud. "He asked me whether you liked—liked Andrew; and I thought you did, and I told him so."

Until now Brownie's eyes had been hot, and dry, and staring; but at last the tears came to them "like the gentle dew from heaven." Bowing her head almost to her knees, she covered her face with her hands. For, although Clement's words of late had led her to make sure of his love, it was sweet to hear that he had actually confessed it to Maud. And, if he did really and truly love her, what did it matter though all else should fail?

"I know what to do, Maud," she said, while her cousin was endeavouring to gather resolution for the last and worst blow of all, "he will write to say where he is. There will be time to bring him back before Friday yet. I will go myself to persuade him to return."

"But, Brownie," was Maud's quiet answer, "he has not gone away alone. He did not go straight from Mr. Staite's to the station. He called at Mrs. Oliver's. Oh, I am afraid—I do not like to say it, darling; but I am afraid they have gone together."

Brownie drew her tearful face from where Maud had held it to her breast, and looked doubtfully into her eyes. Yes, before this morning, she had been jealous of Mrs. Oliver. She could not put aside Maud's suggestion as ridiculous.

"But," she pleaded, presently, "don't be ashamed of me, Maud; but, if he—and you did say so—if he really does—he would not—he could not go away with Mrs. Oliver, could he?"

Maud knew her brother's headstrong nature, and his recent desperate state of mind too well to give a satisfactory answer; whilst Brownie remembered how constantly he had been at the Nook, and how much he owed to Mrs. Oliver.

Suddenly drying her eyes, she started to her feet.

"I will go to Mrs. Oliver's at once, Maud. That will decide everything. If she is still at home, there is an end to these horrible suspicions at once; if not, and we find that Clement—then," she added with an irrepressible sob, "then there may as well be an end to everything."

CHAPTER XXIV. WAITING.

POWERLESS to hinder Brownie from carrying out her intention of visiting the Nook, Maud determined to accompany her, and upon reaching Mrs. Oliver's door, it was she who entered the house to ascertain the best news or the worst; whilst Brownie paced up and down, up and down, staring at its stone walls, as if to learn her fate from its unexpressive face.

She remembered how she had driven over the same ground a month or more ago, doubtful whether she should find Clement dead or alive at her journey's end.

It had been a question of life or death then; but now, she told herself, it was a question of heaven or hell.

At last Maud came slowly along the path, stopping to fasten the gate behind her—doing everything possible to postpone the time for speaking.

"They have gone, Maud?" asked Brownie, interpreting her cousin's unwillingness.

"Yes, Mrs. Oliver has gone, darling."

"And—and Clement with her, Maud?"

"Let us get home," was the answer, as Maud half pushed Brownie into the carriage.

"And Clement with her, Maud?" she repeated.

"My poor girl; what can I say to you? What can I do for you?"

"Don't speak to me yet—presently," was the answer; and she sat staring blankly before her; dead to all hope since she had lost Clement.

By-and-by she turned her agonised face to Maud:

"Tell me just the truth, Maudie. Don't try to make it better than it is. Tell me everything."

"It is not possible to make it better, dear—nor worse. Fanny told me a great deal more than I can understand; but there is no doubt about one thing—Clement arrived this morning just after Uncle Walter left. He and Mrs. Oliver were alone for about half-an-hour; then they went away together in Clement's fly. Fanny heard him tell the coachman to hurry so as to catch the up express. That is all that was known; there is not another trace of them; no clue whatever to their destination."

"But—but about Uncle Walter?" asked Brownie, eager to be mistress of the whole situation.

"He returned after Mrs. Oliver had gone away with Clement. He had been at the Nook quite early this morning, he stayed a long time, and then went away. Upon his arrival this second time Fanny says he was like a madman—perfectly furious. It has been an unhappy household, Brownie! It seems there was a regular fracas last night. According to Fanny the place was like a bear-garden; and Captain Oliver actually left the house some time before Mr. Litton, vowing all kinds of awful things."

"But, Maud," said Brownie, "I do not understand. Why was uncle so put out upon his arrival there the second time, and why was he there at all?"

"I do not understand any more than you do, Brownie," Maud answered; "only this—that she has gone, and Clement with her. Poor Mrs. Oliver and poor Clement!"

And Maud remembered her conversation with Mrs. Oliver on the previous Saturday; how that she had almost begged to be judged leniently for some act at that time uncommitted.

"Maud," exclaimed her cousin, "I know it is wicked; but I hate her. I do—I hate her."

And not another word was exchanged until they reached home.

"So all your plans are upset," said Maud, when they were safely in her room. "Brownie, I am afraid, in any case, they would have ended only in failure. Can't we make some excuse to put these people off?"

"Put them off!" cried Brownie excitedly, "do you think that I shall cease my efforts because of this! Clement has gone. Yes; but his good name is more important than ever. And, Maudie, I have still one hope. No," she added quickly, reading Maud's disapproval in her face, "I do not mean that. Not that sort of hope. Between him and me there never can be anything now; never anything. But he will send his address. I am sure he will. He told me so when he thought of going away before. Oh, he may, Maud; and, if he does, I will go to him."

"You could not, Brownie; not while——"

"But I could. If only he writes, I will. Nothing in all the world shall hinder me. Do you not see how much he has at stake? As for me, I am nothing. I wish I were dead. He must have money; and to obtain money he must become Henry's partner. I will beg and implore him to come back, if only for a few hours. Oh, he must write; there are two whole days yet before Friday evening. Then—then," she added, with an hysterical laugh, "they will all be wishing me many happy returns of the day!"

The postman did not come to Eastwood that evening, and, pleading a headache, truly enough, Brownie went early to bed.

What a night it was! She lay awake, thinking of nothing but the possibility of receiving a letter the next morning; only to know disappointment when the morning came. All day she waited indoors, watching for hours for the first sight of the postman; so that Mrs. Northcott suggested that she was expecting birthday-cards before they were due.

As dinner time drew near, she began to look thoroughly ill, and the sight of her own face in the glass added another to her anxieties. Suppose she should be unable to bear up until the day after to-morrow!

"You will have no roses for Friday, Margaret," said Mrs. Northcott; "no one would believe you were looking forward to your birthday."

"I am not looking forward, auntie," she answered, with difficulty keeping back her tears.

The gong sounded for dinner; Mr.

Litton not having put in an appearance since his journey to Mrs. Oliver's, the three were alone.

They took their places at the table at half-past seven; the last post was due at eight.

Brownie was constantly on the alert; and Maud, watching her, could imagine the fearful anxiety that oppressed her. Suddenly, rat-tat-tat! Most welcome of sounds.

Before its echo died away, Brownie had left the room, to return the next minute waving an envelope frantically above her head.

"From Clement! from Clement!" she exclaimed; and placing it in her cousin's hand, sat down, and burst into tears.

Mrs. Northcott was both angry and curious, begging for enlightenment, while she protested against this disturbance of her meal.

Maud at last read the letter. Merely a few lines dated from Number Twelve, Rochester Street, Strand.

But the address was the moral of the letter.

"I must start at once," cried Brownie, "I can just catch the 9.30."

"Margaret," said Mrs. Northcott, "I demand an explanation of your extraordinary behaviour."

To have satisfied her, however, would have defeated all Brownie's schemes. Let Mrs. Northcott once suspect that any evil was intended against her brother, and there would be an end to the matter at once.

Maud came to the rescue; taking Brownie apart in the first place, and persuading her that it was not fit she should arrive in London late at night; she promised that there should be nothing to hinder her from travelling by an early train in the morning.

Having thus disposed of her cousin, Maud turned to Mrs. Northcott, telling her that Clement had, some time ago, threatened to enlist; that Brownie was anxious he should remain free until the six months, appointed by his father wherein to prove his innocence, had expired.

Maud was endowed with an admirable patience, and she needed it all this evening. It was half-past eleven o'clock before she bade her mother good night, and found her way to Brownie's room to inform her of the success which had attended her efforts.

But, tired out and worn with watching, Brownie was already asleep. Looking round the room, Maud saw that every arrangement had been made for the morrow. Her ulster, hat, and gloves were all put ready to her hand, and on the dressing-table stood a clock with an alarm—borrowed from one of the servants—and set at half-past six. Brownie had fallen asleep longing for the night to pass; she awoke to find her wish fulfilled. It was the morning of the fourth of November.

PAINFUL PLEASURES.

THE other day I took train from Naples to Pompeii. It was a fair, sunny morning, and the sea was like steel, mottled with curved lines where the air breathed upon it. A more gladsome sight than the promontories which bind this most gorgeous of bays, all clear to view in the early light; than the various shapes of white sails upon the water; and the distant cliffs of Capri against the horizon; a more gladsome sight, I say, could not have been offered to human beings by dear Dame Nature in her best mood.

There were three people in the compartment with me. Two were Italians, to whom, of course, the seascape and the exhilarating air were familiar. They read their morning newspapers in excusable neglect of things external.

The third of my companions was of a different species. I did not at first know what to make of him. That he was Anglo-Saxon I hardly doubted. But the "genus" is now so unconscionably comprehensive that I had a wide field for conjecture under this one heading. Was he British? Was he American? Australian? South African? And, if British, was he English, Irish, or Scotch?

To tell the truth, I did not feel irresistibly drawn towards him. One cannot help one's feelings. Sympathy and antipathy are impulses which will not be coerced. They are as wayward, and nearly as strong, as love itself. I can hardly, therefore, blame myself that I looked with but little affection at this long, lean man, in a white planter's hat; whose bronzed face and inflamed eyes, whose jaded expression, and whose feverish glances, first at one window of the carriage and then at the other, with his subsequent rapid usage of pencil and paper, all pro-

claimed him to my intelligence as a globe-trotter of the most compassionate kind.

My Italian companions, now and then, peered up at our friend. His energy of body and mind astonished them. But they contented themselves, I suppose, with the explanation that is at all times to hand for elucidation of the like mysteries of conduct. They assumed that he was English, and, since he was English, he was a chartered eccentric.

By-and-by the stranger paused in his hot chase and record of impressions. He looked at us, his associates, as if he had not hitherto heeded us. The Italians he dismissed from notice immediately. Upon me, however, his gaze paused; and then, curtly, he said: "Going to Pompeii?"

Of course, this was monstrous. We had not been introduced, you know. And he did not for a moment tarry to reflect whether it might be less pleasing to me to be interrogated than to him to interrogate. But it solved the riddle for me. I knew he was not a Briton. He was a Colonist, or an American.

His whole sad story soon flowed forth. He was an Australian, who was under contract to go round the world in about four months, visiting, in the time, the majority of the large cities and famous natural wonders of the earth. He had already been out three months; his contract was broken. In spite of the most heroic efforts he had hitherto failed to see Europe north of Naples. Rome, Venice, Florence, the Riviera, Switzerland, Germany, Paris, and England were still before him. He sighed and sucked his pencil, as he plaintively told me, what was sufficiently apparent, that he was "a bit worn and out of condition with all this bustling about."

He had just arrived in Naples from Palestine. The sun of Jerusalem had inflamed his eyes. He did not think the Holy Land half so interesting as his Bible depicted it. But the hotel in Jerusalem excited his admiration. He told me what he had eaten in it, and the amount of his bill—justifying his enthusiasm, as it seemed to me.

He also kindly warned me against a certain purveyor of donkeys at Jaffa, who, I judge, had hired out to him an animal with more vices and fewer virtues than the average ass may be supposed to possess.

But what most grieved his soul at the moment was the recollection of the misery of the journey he had made only the previous day—from Brindisi to Naples.

"You bet, sir," he moaned, "I've had some bad times in my life; but that travel was one of the worst. I ate a bun at one darned little station, and was going right on to something else, when the engine began to move. Just because I was a stranger, they never told me when the train would go. But I took to my heels, and jumped in; and that bun will be paid for by some one else. After that, I never stirred from the cars; for, you see, if I was once to lose my furniture, I'd never get it again, because I don't talk anything but English. There was not a soul I spoke to on that line who could understand me."

He said this last in the tone of a man declaring that he had lately experienced an earthquake; that the earthquake had occasioned the death of all his relations; and that he alone of his clan survived to be the narrator of the awful event.

Chance parted us at the Pompeii Station. The Australian had had his presentiments about the sufferings to be undergone, even in a dead city like Pompeii; and I had made bold to try and console him with the offer of my companionship. He had jumped at the offer like a hungry trout at a fly. With an intermediary between himself and the guide—whom the authorities give to the stranger in exchange for the two francs which he pays to enter the city—my friend declared that he could almost look forward to a happy day. But it was not to be. As I have said, we were separated. Instead of taking breakfast with me before going through the trial of being "personally conducted," my luckless friend was snapped up straightway by a guide. The last I saw of him were his uplifted hands, as he tried in vain to decline the guide's companionship. And so, for the ensuing hour and a half, I have no doubt he was saddled with the guide as fast as ever a victim was held by his incubus. The guide would talk Italian or French; and my poor friend would say "Yes, yes," and long for the moment when he had done with Pompeii.

There are certain so-called pleasures which may, without a suspicion of exaggeration, be said to be more insufferable than the average pain, which declares itself honestly. The man who embraces one or other of these pleasures is doubly wronged. He is duped by the disguise which ensnares him. And he is wronged by the suffering he is called upon to bear, where he reasonably hoped to revel in enjoyment.

Again, there are certain pleasures—and

their number is legion—which, with mis-use, speedily transform themselves into tortures. The more conspicuous of these are well known to us. Moralists from all time have prattled of them; or built upon them portly volumes, for their own fame, and the world's warning. Solomon, and lesser men, have tested them, and been disillusioned.

Travel is one of these pleasures. It may in the long run be compared to the sugar which—if tradition is to be believed—the shrewd confectioner offers "ad libitum" to his apprentice when the fond youth enters his shop, seduced by the love of comforts. The boy makes himself ill without loss of time; the confectioner smiles and rubs his hands; and henceforth the lambs and lions of sugar, the sweet cakes, and the toffee of the establishment are as secure as if they were under the watch and ward of an octogenarian, the victim of chronic dyspepsia.

Our Australian friend had ridden his horse too hard. Not a little pain was the consequence. He had suffocated his intelligence with the plethora of facts and sights which he had pressed upon it, demanding at the same time that it should digest them all on the instant. That he had wearied his body was also sufficiently apparent. I dare say if the physical part of him could have been put to the question, and compelled to answer truthfully, it would have replied, that of all the toils it had been called upon to endure since it became a sensitive entity, this toil of pleasure was the most detestable.

In the beginning, travel is delightful; even as the first ten or twelve mouthfuls of toffee are, to the eager apprentice, a celestial indulgence. But by-and-by much system is necessary to preserve the aroma of pleasure that accompanies the earlier experience. The novelty of movement and the beauty of the world are less attractive when a month has passed. The imagination annoys its master with pictures of the felicity of home-rest such as it would have ridiculed six weeks previously. There is but a moderate amount of truth in such representations. This, however, is of course nothing to the imagination, which prefers the false to the true. And, likewise, the traveller unaccountably finds himself getting prone to scoff at the sweet spots on the world's surface, which were his original object of pursuit, and which universal testimony applauds for the witchery of their charm. He presumes to

think that his native village of Dullborough-cum-Slow is more enchanting than Naples, and more lively than Vienna.

But there are worse pains, or pleasures in decadence, than excessive travel. I suppose one of the most obvious of these is the passion of love. Here, however, all of us do not suffer alike. If the poets may be believed, they are the chief victims. It is a theme they never tire of discussing. When first they set eyes on the fair one, all was ecstasy. The world was suddenly made radiant. The sun itself was dwarfed by the light that beamed from her eyes, and from the responsive light in the eyes of the man she has ensnared. Everything is metamorphosed; because the man himself has suddenly undergone a metamorphosis. Duly comes the reaction. It does not matter in what guise or stage of the passion, it comes. That it comes eventually is sufficient.

This is the moment when the poet finds the world appallingly blank and obscure. He is conscious of but one thing: that he suffers where he expected to find perennial pleasure. Had he loved with less energy, he would have suffered less.

Of course it is absurd to talk reason to lovers. Nature must be changed ere they will be affected by it.

For this draught of bitter sweet there is no remedy. Our children must drink it or not, according to the caprice of fortune, who may or may not tender the chalice to them. As a matter of form we are bound to warn them. But we are scarcely likely to divert our offspring into the path of judicious affection which maturity has taught us is best for us.

There are also occupations which, though formerly a source of pure, invigorating pleasure, in time become dire pains. It may be that the change is wrought unconsciously. We have not seen the line of demarcation which indicates the "ne plus ultra" of pleasure. We have worked, and worked, and exhausted the charm of the hobby, unwittingly. And the more ardently we have embraced the pleasure, the more impossible it becomes to get severed from it. Not that we desire this. But our physician, if he be a shrewd diagnoser, will, without hesitation, pronounce the need of this divorce. "You have killed your pleasure," he might well say. "You must either cut yourself adrift from its corpse, or be content to die a slow and disagreeable death in company with the dead body."

You may see a thousand examples of this kind of deplorable folly in every square mile of the metropolis. Even though you do not know the men as individuals, you may know them as types. The business man, with abstracted gaze, bent head, lip of iron, and eye of ice; the business man, who moves through the streets as if they were part of a world in which he has no share; who sits at his desk for twelve hours out of the twenty-four, with no wandering thought to invigorate his bedulled and harassed brain; who talks mechanically, except on the one subject of his trade; who eats only in order that he may return refreshed to his counting-house; who to his sorrowful wife is less like a man than a bale of merchantable goods; and who regards his male offspring as but so many chips of his own counter, to be fashioned into mortals as wooden and soulless as himself—this man is the type of many to be found in all large cities. He entered life with enthusiasm, and with just those capacities that might raise him to the dignity of the merchant prince. His business was all in all to him. At first it was a pleasure—an honourable and laudable pleasure, moreover. But it comes to this, in only too many instances. He pays the penalty for his over-appreciation of his pleasure. The pleasure becomes a pain of so avaricious a nature, that it denies access to any genuine pleasure which sues for admission into the mind it has so cruelly monopolised.

In brisk contrast with this grave form of pleasure transformed, we may mention a painful pleasure, which, in our day, draws votaries as it never before drew them. The pain of this pleasure is at first so much more decided than the pleasure itself, that one wonders how the latter is able to overmaster it. In truth, however, other influences of a different kind here come into operation. Fashion, and the love of imitation are as potent agents upon conduct as moralists and mere sensation itself. And these are the two prime forces which lead the innocent youth of the land to put the first pipe between the lips, and to blow out the smoke of their fancy in grievous vexation of stomach.

Like sea-sickness, the pain consequent upon this early indulgence is truly indescribable. Its effects upon the mind of the victim are the converse of those of love upon the hearts of lovers. How ghastly the world! With what a dim pall of woe are all things clad! How infinite the suf-

fering amid men and beasts, doomed fortuitously to inhabit a globe so cheerless, so cruel! And how odious a brute the friend who offered the fatal cigar, which it seemed an act of weakness to decline!

Some of us pass through this stage by degrees, which, if somewhat undignified, do, at any rate, modify the acuteness of the pain which attends upon a single bold effort to smoke like a practised adult. I confess my own judicious depravity of conduct in this respect. There were several of us together in one corner of the playground. The eldest may have been twelve years of age. I was ten. Fumarole, a dark-skinned urchin from some island in the West Indies, had received a fine cake by the carrier. It was indeed an excellent cake. Moreover, the cake was wrapped in a fold of thickish brown paper, rather more hirsute than is the mode with ordinary brown paper. Thus Fate put the temptation in our way.

The cake eaten, we divided the brown paper, and rolled it into as many cigars as there were individuals. Then, with a keen eye of watch towards the gate by which our master came and went, we lit our cigars, and timidly inhaled the horrid smoke. It was magnificent; but it was not genuine. Yet, though innocent of tobacco, the things had a sad effect upon three or four of us. Fumarole himself was untouched by the hand of suffering. It was extraordinary what a man of the world was this West Indian boy still some years distant from his teens. He puffed and smiled, and said it was awfully nice; nor did his stomach bear witness against him. And other hardened boys did like Fumarole.

But I, on my part, and Smithers and Buffer and Ronaldson respectively, paid the penalty for our presumption. Why should I renew the pangs of the past by a recital of them? Suffice to say that I withdrew to another corner of the playground, pretending that I wished to water a radish I was cultivating in a little garden of my own. There I sat me down on the railing and sighed. And there, half-an-hour afterwards, I was found by the master, still sighing. But kind Heaven now came to my aid with compensations. It was assumed that I was ill. And so I was sent upstairs to the matron, who gave me delicacies, and ordered me to bed when the delicacies were eaten.

On the whole, however, it is well not to expect Heaven to provide compensations

when we misuse the gifts or opportunities that are put before us. Then, if the compensations appear, they are the more welcome. Above all, it is injudicious to be gluttons in pursuit of what we conceive to be pleasures. Otherwise our pleasures will, without fail, turn to scourges. There are few things more disagreeable than to be deceived by the person whom we esteemed the dearest of our friends.

SOME ODD IDEAS.

THE Odd Ideas which the over-fanciful minds of philosophers and so-called men of science have brought forth, necessarily provoke a smile of mingled wonder and pity, they are at once so grotesque and so futile. As fools rush in where angels fear to tread, so these restless spirits have indulged in speculations on subjects the most mysterious and remote: subjects which common-sense is content to leave alone, as lying beyond the grasp of human reason, and offering no prospect of useful inquiry or fruitful research. Even the Creation has not been safe from their unprofitable ingenuity. Chevreau, in his "*Histoire du Monde*," records that some authorities have fixed this event as having taken place in Spring; others are obliging enough to furnish the precise date, namely, Friday, September the sixth, at four o'clock p.m.; while others go in for December the twenty-fourth. An Italian scholar of the eighteenth century, one Batardi, informed the Abbé Barthelemy that he was engaged in writing an abridgement of "*Universal History*," which he intended to preface with a solution of a problem of the highest importance, both for astronomy and history; that is, the determination of the exact point of the heavens in which the Creator placed the sun when the world was being made! The Talmudists are able to furnish us with exact details of the incidents that marked some of the hours of the day on which Adam was created. Thus, during the first hour, the Creator kneaded the dust from which the First Man was fashioned, and it soon became an embryo. Second hour, Adam was able to stand upon his feet. Fourth hour, God summoned him, and bade him give to the animals the names they were to be known by. Seventh hour, marriage of Adam and Eve, whose hair had been exquisitely curled for the occasion! Tenth hour, Adam sinned. Eleventh hour, he

was judged, and banished from Paradise. Twelfth hour, he began to experience the fatigue and pain of labour.

Adam, it is said, when first created stretched from one end of the world to the other; but, after he had sinned, the Creator passed His hand upon him and reduced him to the measurement of one hundred ells. Others add that this was done at the request of the angels, who were not unnaturally alarmed at his original gigantic proportions.

According to Monéri, Adam had a profound knowledge of all the sciences, and especially of astrology, many secrets of which he communicated to his children; and he engraved upon two tables various observations he had made on the course of the stars.

A man so learned would have been much to blame if he had not been willing that his descendants should profit by his acquirements; and, accordingly, he wrote a couple of treatises—one on the Creation, the other on the Divinity—two subjects, on both of which he was in a position to give the world some interesting information. Who will not regret that those books—original in the strictest sense—have not come down to us? It would seem that they escaped destruction at the Deluge, for a Mohammedan writer asserts that when Abraham visited the land of the Sabeans, he opened Adam's portmanteau, and found there his venerable ancestor's two precious volumes. Some rabbis attribute to Adam the composition of the one hundred and thirty-first Psalm!

But the wildest and most fantastic idea is that of the celebrated visionary Antoinette Bourignon, who died in 1680, and whose revelations are recorded in the "Vie Continué de Mademoiselle Bourignon." She protested that God revealed to her, spiritually, Adam, the first man, whose body was purer and more transparent than crystal, and as light as air; in which and through which could be seen the vessels and channels of light which transpired through every pore—vessels wherein flowed liquids of all kinds and all colours, bright and diaphanous, not only water, and milk, and wine, but fire, air, and other "elemental substances." His movements were admirably harmonious; everything obeyed him, nothing resisted him, nothing could injure him. He was much taller than any of his present descendants, with hair short and curly, bordering upon black, and wore on the upper lip a slight moustache.

The Temptation and the Fall, as related in the Book of Genesis, are subjects which, as one can well imagine, have proved fruitful in conjectures to the rabbis, the ecclesiastical writers, and the visionaries of all countries and periods. Thus, some pretend that it was the spectacle of the loving caresses of Adam and Eve in their Paradisiacal innocence which filled the Serpent with a furious jealousy, and that, in order to get rid of Adam, he persuaded Adam's wife to eat of the Forbidden Fruit. Others affirm that Eve, misrepresenting the Divine words, and informing the Serpent that God had forbidden her to eat of this tree, or to touch it, the Tempter seized her, and pushed her against it; and that then, on his pointing out to her that she had suffered no harm from the contact, she was persuaded that she would also suffer no harm from eating of it—a conviction which her descendants have had the greatest reasons for regretting.

Opinions differ as to the form which the Tempter assumed in order to beguile the too credulous Eve. One is that Sammael, the Prince of Demons, presented himself mounted on a serpent as big as a camel; another, just as accurate, that the Serpent had borrowed the enticing countenance of a young girl—a tradition adopted by some of the mediæval artists.

Opinions differed also as to the length of time during which Adam enjoyed Paradise before he sinned. To these Dante refers in the "Paradiso," cxxvi., 139-142, thus rendered by Cary:

Upon the mount
Most high above the waters, all my life,
Both innocent and guilty, did but reach
From the first born to that which cometh next
(As the sun changes quarter) to the sixth.

So that, in Dante's belief, our First Parents spent only nine hours in Eden, both before and after the Fall included. And so, in the "Historia Sabastiea" of Petrus Cemastor, we read: "Lividum tradunt eos fuisse in Paradiso septem horas."

We are naturally led on to enquire where was Eden—this Paradise which our First Parents so quickly forfeited? Among the Hebrew traditions recorded by Saint Jerome, is one to the effect that it was created before the world came into existence, and therefore lay beyond its limits. Moses Bar Cepha places it midway between the earth and the firmament. Some one conceived the odd idea that it was on a mountain which reached nearly to the moon; and some one else that it was situated in the

third region of the air, and was higher than all the mountains of the earth by twenty cubits, so that the Deluge was unable to reach it. Morinus preserves a theory that, before the Fall, the whole earth was Paradise—was, in fact, situated in Eden, in the midst of all kinds of festivities and felicities. Then as to its dimensions: While Ephraem Syrus maintains that it surrounded the earth, Johannes Tostatus restricts it to an area of forty miles in circuit—something less than the Isle of Wight; and others have made it extend over Syria, Arabia, and Mesopotamia.

The writer of the Book of Genesis having omitted to specify the kind of fruit of which Adam and Eve partook in the Garden, his silence has given rise to a host of odd ideas. Some persons assert that it was an apple; others, citron or pomegranate. Milton is wisely vague:

A goodly tree
Laden, with fruit of finest colours mixed,
Ruddy and gold.

The Rabbi Solomon gives it as his opinion that Moses purposely concealed the name of the fruit, "whose mortal taste brought death into the world, and all our woe," for fear it would always be regarded with aversion.

According to Saint Jerome, Adam was buried at Hebron; according to other authorities, on Calvary. But both these statements are open to the objection that neither Hebron nor Calvary existed before the Deluge. "If this should trouble you," says Bayle, "Bar Cephra will repeat to you the assertion of a doctor much esteemed in Syria, that Noah dwelt in Judæa; that he planted in the plains of Sodom the cedars of which he built the ark; that he carried with him into the ark the bones of Adam; that, after abandoning the ark, he shared out the bones among his sons; that the skull fell to Shem, and that Shem's descendants, being put into possession of Judæa, they interred this skull on the spot where Adam's tomb had formerly stood."

But in Odd Ideas on these, and other subjects, the moderns do not fall far below the standard of the Rabbis and the Fathers of the Church. A French advocate, Jean le Féron, who flourished in the later years of the sixteenth century, and had a pretty taste in matters of heraldry, was good enough to lay down Adam's coat-of-arms. They were simplicity itself—three fig-leaves! Henrion, a member of the French Academy, and, in his day, of some repute as an Orientalist, undertook a series of

researches into the weights and measures of the Ancients. That the Academy might have an idea of the treat in store for them, he brought forward a kind of chronological scale of the different statures of eminent personages from the Creation down to the Birth of Christ. As, for example: Adam was one hundred and twenty-five feet nine inches in height; Eve, one hundred and eighteen feet nine and three-quarter inches; Noah, one hundred and three feet; Abraham, twenty-seven feet; Moses, fifteen feet; Hercules, ten feet; Alexander, six feet; and Julius Cæsar, five feet. If this process of diminution had continued, it is appalling to think of the insignificance to which, by this time, man would have been reduced!

Escorbiac, a wretched French versifier, published, in 1613, "The Christiad," a poem, in which he included, among the sins which have flooded the world since the Fall, the making of bad rum. In the following century, another littérateur, the Chevalier de Causans, professed to explain the mysteries of Original Sin and the Trinity by the quadrature of the circle. He announced that he had deposited with a notary the sum of three hundred thousand francs, as the reward of those who succeeded in refuting his demonstration. But, as he would not admit that he was beaten, the payment of the three hundred thousand francs was postponed sine die.

About the middle of the seventeenth century, an audacious attempt was made to rob Adam of the honour of having been the First Man. Isaac de la Peyrère, in his odd book, "*Præadamitæ, seu Exercitatio super versibus 12, 13, 14, capituli V Epistolæ B. Pauli ad Romanos*," attempts to prove that there were two creations of men: the first, on the sixth day of the Creation of the World, when God created man, male and female, which must mean, he says, the creation of men and women in all parts of the earth, whence proceeded the Gentiles; the second did not take place until long afterwards, when Adam was created to become the father of the Jews. Those who accepted this theory were called Preadamites; the author, however, was compelled to abjure it at the feet of Pope Alexander the Seventh.

A few Odd Ideas, on miscellaneous subjects, we shall bring together without any attempt at classification.

Olaus Rudbeck, a Swedish philosopher, who died in 1740, maintains in his "*Ich-*

thyologia Biblica," that the "selavim," on which the Hebrews were nourished in the wilderness, were not locusts or grasshoppers, but herrings!

In one of the Norwegian fiords, on the second of November, 1587, were caught two members of this well-known family, on which, through some strange mystification, people thought they could trace the peculiar marks which had been observed on another fish of the same kind caught in Pomerania, on the second of May, 1566. These herrings caused quite a sensation, as well they might, if one accepts the explanation gravely put forward by Tobias Eglin, in his "Conjectura Halientica" (1598), that they solved the secrets of Daniel and the Apocalypse, and furnished remarkably clear prophecies of the Church Militant! What a kettle of fish to be sure!

Origen has an Odd Idea in regard to the death of Judas Iscariot. He affirmed that the treacherous Apostle desired to anticipate the death of his Divine Master, hoping to meet Him in the other world and obtain His pardon. A sect arose in the same country, who were known as Cainites. They worshipped as saints those whom the Church most strenuously condemned, such as Cain, Korah, and the inhabitants of Sodom; and to Judas Iscariot they rendered a special homage, on the ground that, but for his treason, mankind would have been deprived of the blessings which flowed from the death of the Saviour.

The reader will recollect that Judas Iscariot found an ingenious apologist in De Quincey.

In his second series of "The Pleasures of Life," Sir John Lubbock suggests a number of occupations which may be reserved for men in the eternal future.

A Jesuit writer, Gabriel Henao, published, in 1652, a ponderous folio, entitled "Empyreologia, seu Philosophia Christiana de Empyreo Cœlo," in which he describes, with much detail, the felicity of Paradise, and promises us concerts of instrumental music, as upon earth.

But this cannot be compared with the particularity in which another Jesuit, Louis Henriquez, indulges in his "Occupation des Saints dans le Ciel." According to him, the Christian heaven will differ but little from the Mohammedan paradise. There will be public baths of the most delicious character, in which everybody will swim like fishes, and sing as melodiously as nightingales. The angels will be attired

in female costumes, made of the richest stuffs, and will regale the saints with the sight of their curled tresses, their gay "tempestuous petticoats," their laces, ribbons, silks, and satins. Both men and women will entertain one another with masquerades, feasts, and dances. In short, this pious Jesuit describes a materialistic heaven of the coarsest and most sensual enjoyment.

A third member of the same great order, in his "Historia Sacre Latininitatis" (1635), pretends that the blessed will frequently discuss in Latin.

Holwell, a man of letters, who published, in 1787, his "Dissertations on the Origin and Occupation of Intellectual Beings," asserts that the rebellious angels have been changed into lions, horses, dogs, and other animals.

Weir, the Dutchman, in his well-known book, "Pseudo-monarchia Dæmonum," enumerates sixty-nine infernal "dominions, principalities, and powers"—as Milton calls them—who have under their orders six thousand six hundred and sixty-six legions.

In this connection we may mention an Odd Idea entertained among the Christians of the third century, that those who took wives were of all others the most subject to the influence of malignant demons (so says Mosheim). But experience has abundantly proved the reverse. A man's wife is usually his good angel, or, as Novalis puts it, "any beloved object is the centre of a paradise."

As to those Odd Ideas on miscellaneous topics, which float through the dusty tomes of the old writers, we could fill pages with them. For instance, Isaac Vossius wrote an essay to prove that the soul of animals is nothing but fire.

Levitt, of Worcester, as late as 1756, perceived in fire the essence of the universe; at least, that would seem to be the teaching of his book, "The Subtil Medium Proved; or, That Wonderful Power of Nature, so long ago conjectured by the most ancient and remarkable philosophers, which they called sometimes Æther, but oftener Elementary Fire. Showing that all the distinguishing and essential qualities ascribed to Æther by them, and the most eminent modern philosophers, are to be found in electrical fire, and that, too, in the utmost degree of perfection."

Our last Odd Idea shall be Lord Monboddo's, that there are four distinct minds in man—the elemental, the vegetable, the

animal, and the intellectual; and that these form the tetractys of the Pythagoreans. Pythagoras, he thought, was of an intermediate nature between divine and human, and asserted that there were many such beings in ancient times, who were revered as heroes and demigods.

YACHTING IN STILL WATERS.

IN FIVE PARTS. PART IV.

THE panorama of Poole Harbour, as seen from our anchorage off Shipstall, is a very striking one, diversified as it is by high down, wood and moor, lake and island. On the grassy point the fisherman's fine black retriever frisks about, knocking over a small child or two, delighted with his transient liberty. The poor doggie's life is anything but all beer and skittles; long, monotonous days are spent on the roof of his kennel tugging at the chain, and barking furiously in frantic endeavours to get at the legs of any stranger passing. His proclivities being decidedly in favour of game, the proximity of Lord Eldon's coverts obliges him to be kept a prisoner. His nights are chiefly spent in the duck-punt or fishing-boat, sitting perfectly still, and scarcely winking, for fear of destroying the frail balance; occasionally, at the word of command, floundering into the tenacious black mud, and engaging in deadly conflict with a wounded bird, which makes free use of its long, sharp bill before being seized in the dog's strong jaws and borne to the boat. On the gorse-covered cliff under which we are anchored, the turf-cutters are at work turning over their fuel with a hay-fork, or building up peat stacks for the long winter nights, which in this wind-swept estuary are especially inclement. Arne Wood, above the cliff, shows black-green against the sky, terminating in a point where streaks of silver light glint through the straight black trunks of the pines, where they grow sparsely. Far away the high down begins at Creech Barrow, under which lie the valuable clay pits of Furzebrook, from which the finest china is made, stretching away to Corfe, where it dips into the valley, and is broken by a smooth, round-topped turfy hill, crowned by the fine old ruin of Corfe Castle. Rising again abruptly, Challow Hill, overlooking Corfe, melts into Nine Barrow Down, and continues rising to a height of six hundred and forty-two feet, with another trifling dip over Studland,

down to the sea cliff at Ballard Down, the fine tower of Lord Eldon's beautiful church at Kingston on the heights above Encombe being just visible at certain times of tide above the nearer Corfe Range. On the highest ridge of Nine Barrow Down, just over Rempstone, some well-preserved ancient Roman barrows may still be made out; probably the place of sepulture of the great Captains who perished when the Roman galleys landed their soldiers on the coast outside Swanage. Nestling under the steep bush-clad slope of Nine Barrow Down, are the smiling farms of Rollington and Brianscomb, and the sweet hamlet of Bushey hidden under a black mass of old stone pines. Over Rempstone Heath a glimpse of hard white road, cut in the purple heather, flashes out at intervals, winding and dipping on its way to the sea at Studland; and lying low, sheltered from every wind by vast and impervious woods, the Lord of the Manor of Rempstone, Mr. Calcraft, is "at home" in his charming old-world house, the sombre trees broken here and there by the tender green of the wheat fields, stretching half up the smooth slope, and turning, just where the corn is yellowing, into a flame of poppies. At high water Wych Farm trees, and bright green fields seem to be lapped by the tide, so vast is the silvery mere, stretching by winding channels up into the heathery moors of Rempstone and Wych. From Corfe to Studland, a road follows the very top of Nine Barrow Down. It may be reached at considerable fatigue through Brianscomb Farm, from whence a perfectly lovely expanse of valley, silvery water, all the wide estuary, and the blue, open sea, is the reward of a toilsome climb. Skimming the gleaming waters are two white-winged yachts making for the Needles, whose cliffs stand up like white pillars out of the sea; the Bournemouth steamer, bound for Swanage, looks from the height like a child's toy, dragging an ever-widening trail of white foam after her. Poole Bar and the dangerous Hook, sleeping like a fierce hound, but ever ready to awake with a whisper of southerly or south-easterly wind, and to rage and swell at the shortest notice; red quarries on the hillside; gaping clay pits white and bare on the plains; more lovely than all, the whole of Poole Harbour spread out beneath like a sea-chart. Silver streaks, representing Wareham and Wych Channels, shine in the sun, all their intricate windings

plain as in a map. Here and there, on the wide heath towards Wareham, little plantations of delicate firs resemble a box of painted toys, while from the sea cliffs vast flocks of wild fowl arrive with the ebbing-tide to feast upon the sea-waifs—a glorious prospect of land and sea, well worth an hour's toil to enjoy.

Between the barren heath of Fitzworth and Long Island, a glimpse of Ower Passage and its pretty homesteads are dimly seen in the haze. Here was an ancient ferry from Poole, long fallen into disuse.

Between Brownsea and Furze Island a palpitating line of seemingly fast-flowing tide is visible outside the harbour, "Haven Point Hotel" dancing up and down in the rarefied air as if it were a marionette. White and tan sail vessels glide in on shining water, with, to all appearance, five or six jibs and no hull; and North Haven Point, in reality very little above the sea level, has all the appearance of a steep cliff.

Brownsea is crowned with wind-bent pines, and is honeycombed on this front with clay mining. The tall chimneys and pottery works, silent and lonely, are hardly so attractive as the other three sides; but the estuary of Poole is nothing if not lonely and untrodden.

The town itself—with its forest of laden ships, its forty chimneys and huge blue factory—on the contrary, is always up and doing. Even as we look, a train speeds away past Hamworthy, with white puffs of cloudy steam mingling with the trees, till it reappears again with a tremendous hollow reverberation when crossing a viaduct over the shallow waters of Lychet Bay, and so we creep through the many windings of Ball's Lake, encountering the "Comet," with her clay barges, back to the place from which we started off Shipstall.

WYCH.

If Lord Eldon is ubiquitous at Arne, no less so is Mr. Calcraft, of Rempstone, at Wych. All the islands in Poole, except Brownsea, including Round and Long Islands, Furze and Green Islands, and the peninsulas of Fitzworth and Ower, Goat-horn, and Greenland, with Wych and Bushey, own him as Lord of the Manor. His sway extends over the Royal Chase to Wareham, and from Challow Hill, overlooking Corfe Castle, up to the highest ridge of Nine Barrow Down, at the foot of which his house, at Rempstone, snugly

sheltered from easterly winds, is hardly visible from any point of view save the downs above.

Leaving our anchorage, at Shipstall, at low tide, one makes sure of getting up to Wych without sticking in the mud for more than half an hour or so. Soon after sunrise, at low water, there is seldom any wind to speak of on a fine summer's morning. A jib and foresail, aided by the tide, is thus all that is needed to waft you up to higher waters. With the mainsail on her, should you take the ground in the narrow reaches, her sharp stem wedges itself firmly into the mud, where you remain lamenting till floated off by the rising tide.

The booms in Wych Channel, as far as Middlebere, leave nothing to be desired, being sufficiently numerous to keep you straight as far as the fork, where the well-staked Middlebere Lake leads to the clay depôts, while the now quite unused Wych Lake takes a sharp curve to the left; the bar, a hard sand drift, crossing the channel obliquely, with about five feet on it in one spot at low water. At this time of tide the channel is perfectly plain, whole families of decayed stumps, an inch or two out of the mud, being visible on either side. The only human habitation in sight is a farm-house, without so much as the shelter of one lone tree to relieve its bareness, on the most exposed part of Fitzworth. It is here, in the great rush and sedge tracts, bordering the shingle beach, that barrow-ducks, dab chicks, and heron are "at home." They receive you with much curiosity, but quite without fear, the barrow-ducks allowing the yacht's bows to glide nearly into the midst of a brood before the little, fluffy, yellow-and-brown chicks think it necessary to get out of the way, by diving head-foremost into the water, reappearing the instant after, astern, as gay as ever.

Among the shingle on these nearly inaccessible shores, robbs lay their little plover-like eggs, leaving them quite unsheltered, as do penguins and grebes in uninhabited islands; while the barrow-ducks, too idle to make a nest for themselves, find a convenient rabbit-hole in the bank—adverse circumstances having prevented the owner returning one sad day—in which they proceed to lay their eggs and bring up a young family in other folks' homes.

Round and Long Island, as we glide on, unfold many beauties, and, on the other side, we see the pine-clad crest of Arne, the grey

little church on its grassy knoll, with all the village clustering round, and the little seedling firs in regular gradations stretching away to Combe and Middlebere. The latter is aptly named in ancient Celtic, the word signifying a low marsh overgrown with scrub, or a withy bed. It is much changed by drainage in these days—a large and smiling farm flourishing at Middlebere, through which an iron road runs, bringing china-clay from Norden, close to Corfe, down to the wharf at Middlebere.

Fitzworth, too, at first belies itself, for it is only on some views that the house is absolutely bare and unclothed. Under the hill behind, several fine trees droop over the cow-byre, and stack-yard, all farmed by Mr. Calcraft himself. The Wych Channel becomes quite serpentine in the higher reaches, and two blind creeks, wide and enticing, like American tracks—which begin so promisingly, and end up a gum-tree—are to be avoided. The sweeps—that is, large oars worked on crutches, are much in requisition about this period, notwithstanding which, an ominous scraping under her keel is heard, suggestive of hard, gravelly bottom. At the confluence of the Neas with the Corfe River, are two aged posts on either side, and here, midchannel, in a hole twenty feet deep, caused by the scour of the Neas River, we bring up, the two cables are taken round the posts, and we swing in the middle. The windings of Wych Lake come to an end, as far as navigation is concerned, at the ferry, about one mile from our posts, where the gaunt skeleton of a large pier still remains, where formerly the pipe-clay from Thrasher's Pits, on the way to Corfe, was shipped. A ferry of some importance across to Middlebere existed here, though where the traffic came from or went to, is now difficult to conceive. The ancient ferry-house is a labourer's cottage, with thick walls, a hoary, sloping roof, and deep, sheltered porch; but a refuge for man and beast in the shape of a large cow-house and barn has long been unroofed and grass-grown. A lovely, secluded turf lane, lined with lady-fern, leads through the gate to Wych Farm on the left, where excellent eggs, cream, and butter may be had, and straight on over Wych Heath to Corfe Castle.

A glance at the Chart of Poole Harbour—Potter and Company, Poultry, London, price two shillings and sixpence—will show the waste of lonely waters that surrounds you on every side. When lying at

the posts off Neas Point, the chimneys of Fitzworth Cottage are just in sight over the sand hill, and the roof of the ferry-house at Wych can be seen; but no living eyes, save those of the sheep and rabbits, or the sea birds on the wing, look at you with wonder from the gorse hills. When the mud shoots, and especially in bad weather, the sea-birds look like a snow-storm, wheeling and circling, and finally alighting, with outstretched wings, upon the shallows, till, finding something to their liking, they quiet down and gorge themselves. In the pools of Neas River, luggs (worms), and minute shell-fish exist in enormous numbers, as the wild-duck well know.

A pair of herons live in the high reed islands towards Middlebere, and come solemnly out to feed at the right time of tide, as if by clock-work, prancing about with high-stepping gait, and neck outstretched, perfectly unconcerned at the proximity of the yacht. Soon after sunrise, as many as thirteen herons have been seen stalking over the mud in about six inches of water, within a hundred yards of us. The fishermen, helpless to prevent their depredations, as they are forbidden to shoot them, have a peculiar dislike to these birds, as they stand in the eel-holes and shallow pools, and gobble up an enormous amount of fish, in an especially aggravating manner. They appear to have a wholesome horror of being drowned, keeping their wings outspread, if there is any danger of slipping out of their depth, being unable to swim.

Over this great expanse of shining water the gorgeous tints of sunset are reflected with wonderful exactness, while, after it has gone down behind the hills over Creech, and the tints are fast fading, a keen, wet sea fog very frequently rolls in from Studland over the "little sea," and the low-lying heaths of Rempstone and Wych, covering and shrouding the towers of Corfe, and flooding the valley to Wareham.

With night, on Wych Lake, are heard all sorts of curious sounds from the bird and insect world. Teal and heron, snipe and mallard, fly low overhead, the fanning of their wings being distinctly audible. Fish leap alongside, escaping from their foes; even a shoal of porpoises once rolled and splashed, and bored past us up to the ferry, returning with the tide.

In summer, in these estuaries, the wind usually dies away towards evening, and a stillness perfectly extraordinary

settles down over all; while little, sharp, black sedge islets, bathed in a lake of crimson, and the deep gloom of Arne trees are reflected miles over the quiet water, and the yacht herself has an exact double under water, as clear, sharp, and plain as the original.

Later, when every respectably-behaved bird ought to be asleep, the denizens of reed bed and sedge island select that moment to pursue the family quarrels, which seem never-ending among them. They croak and grumble, squawk and quack, with every conceivable gradation of note—angry, aggressive, plaintive, distressed, vituperative, and sleepy—sometimes only complaining of an especially damp nest; sometimes lamenting the departure of one of their chicks, a victim to a fierce old water rat, who drags it, shrieking, off to a burrow under the rush roots, and then there is a terrible to-do among the surviving parents and relations.

The birds who breed in Wych Lake are brown duck, barrow duck, teal, moorhen, robb, snipe, plover, curlew, pewit, heron, shag, and diver. Herons, here, contrary to their usual habit of building their nests on the hanging branches of trees, make them among the high reeds. Those who visit the upper waters in bad weather, or to feed, are widgeon, redhead, spoonbill, wild-duck, coote, grebe, sea-gull, geese, pintail, cormorant, crane, and puffin.

One of its greatest charms is the entire absence of human life in Wych Lake. Here no tourist comes, here are no steam-launches, or fashionable people. One is alone with Nature, ever a beloved and attractive companion to those who love her. It is a sweet, fresh, pure spot, the keen salt wind rushes in from seaward, and gives place in its turn to the soft land breeze, which steals over the heath and fir-clad valley, bringing with it the delicious purity of a dry, sandy soil, which makes the air off a heather-covered sand-tract so bright and exhilarating.

We sit on deck after dinner till night has blotted out all save the lights of Poole, which burn, and glow, and flicker miles away over the quiet water. When tired and chill, what a charming prospect the cabin presents as we descend and close the doors, into a bright, warm, cheery habitation, well-lighted with silver lamps, reflected over and over again in the looking-glass panels—red silk curtains, and blinds closely drawn, and two folding arm-chairs inviting to repose and tobacco, one on

each side of the nickel-plated stove, where a bright little fire of Welsh coal blazes up cheerfully; while heaps of papers and nice new books are piled up on the Sutherland table in our midst. Except during a few of the highest spring tides, the vessel is calm and peaceful all night, secured to the posts; but when "springs have taken on," and a gentle breeze springs up about midnight, a regular saturnalia, especially trying to light sleepers, goes on. First comes a curious grating sound, caused by the cable tightening, which has previously been lying on the ground; then a continual slapping, flapping, and knocking begins, particularly exasperating, which is said to be "only the halliards chattering as the wet comes out of the rope." Sleep, then, appears possible, when—swirl, grate, grind, the tide catches her bow, and the chains grate over the coppered stem, making one feel quite giddy. Then a great stillness, as the tide sweeps strongly up, gurgling alongside as it laps past. Soon after, creak and chatter, ad nauseam, with the halliards again.

Why in the world does it not wake the men and drive them on deck to secure that fiendish rope? but they both sleep the sleep of the weary—deep and profound—if one may judge by the groans and snorts from the fore-castle, muffled by distance and blankets.

There is excellent landing alongside the rails inside Neas Point at high water to half-ebb, to the disgust and indignation of a colony of pewits, who own some nests hard by among the rushes and bent. With great idiocy they draw attention to the fact by wheeling with drooping wings round in a circle, uttering the loudest cries, and approaching so near in their anxiety as to fan you with their powerful pinions. A whole fleet of barrow-ducks, just hatched in a rabbit-hole, put to sea, escorted by their two anxious parents, as our boat heaves in sight, so small, yellow, and fluffy, that it must certainly be their first occasion of taking the water. However, they know all about it, and conduct themselves like experienced ducks of the world. One parent leads; and we fancied the father brings up the rear in a general way, to see that no stragglers fall behind, or any of that sort of thing, whipping in with great promptitude, and an angry chevy at the slightest sign of lagging. They are large, heavy birds, and excellent eating, albeit the flesh is rather red.

Charming walks may be taken from Neas Point over the heath and sand-tracts to Fitzworth and Ower; and by boat the Neas River may be navigated some little distance, till further progress is barred by an impenetrable wall of tall green reeds six or seven feet high, feathery oat grass, and strong yellow iris. Reed-cutting is, about here, one of the farm-labourer's few winter occupations; and, hidden among the reed-beds, he lurks after dark in his mud flat, waiting for the flight of fowl, then paddling after the fallen game into the open mere. Though Wych is more especially the home of the sea-fowl, whose piercing, melancholy, agonised screams, rend the air when bad weather impends, the bittern still utters its melancholy cry by night in Neas and Corfe Rivers; and larks in enormous flights hover high over their nests in the coarse water-meadows. Cuckoos, too, fly from Arne Wood over Wych in the evening shadows, hurrying by with nervous, uncertain cry, as they wing their steady, swift, unswerving flight to a neighbouring tree, from whence they cuckoo forth their gladness at having reached a safe haven. The windings of Wych Lake from the posts to the ferry are distracting when the mud is covered; and result in stranding you on many a treacherous point where the booms have disappeared during the previous winter. Landing beside the old crumbling pier, and stepping gingerly on the stones to avoid being planted up to the ankles in masses of slippery white clay—a bygone legacy from Thrasher's Pits, the clay from whence was last shipped here about forty years ago—a smooth green patch of fine turf leads past the solid old rubble walls and ruins of a barn to the cottage opposite, whose thick walls and hoary old thatched roof show what the builders of other days did to keep folks warm. Here is a well, not immaculate, and a productive garden where vegetables may be had. Wych Farm, owned of course by Mr. Calcraft, has recently changed hands; its sturdy old walls and capacious chimney corner are quite an ideal of comfort. Hard toil, however, is required winter and summer to make anything like a living out of the rush and bracken-covered fields, where the soil is especially poor and sandy.

In spring the bare meadows are studded with wild hyacinth, orchis, and cowslip, while in summer the wet ditches which divide them from the rolling heath are choked with great, strong growths of Os-

munda Regalis, the Royal fern, six or seven feet high, whose tall spikes of green flower shoot up from their massive woody roots. "Blechnum spicant" lines the black water-courses, and "aspidium oreopteris," though essentially a dry mountain fern, grows in huge clumps over three feet high in the ditches at Wych Ferry. When getting up a giant root, especial care must be taken, as the fronds, when young, are so extremely brittle that they break off at the merest touch.

Many charming expeditions may be made on foot, from Wych Ferry, by the able-bodied, with a pair of thick boots and skirts curtailed. In anything like dry weather a walk to the secluded hamlet of Bushey—turning off to the left by the farm—well repays a little exertion in leaping from stone to stone and occasionally floundering into a damper hollow when crossing the low-lying portion of Wych Heath, or skirting a peat morass that experience proves to be decidedly untrustworthy; but it is here, among the damp, black soil, where the water in tiny stagnant pools reflects every hue of the rainbow, that the great, deep-blue gentian—now nearly drained off the face of the earth in England—and enormous clumps of the blechnum fern flourish in greatest beauty. When plucking a handful of the blue gentian, one feels regret at the cruel theft, remembering how precious and scarce they are; but no eye save your own will rest upon their deep-blue trumpets, and none will miss them. The hollow of Wych Heath is the last spot known to me where this beautiful flower still lingers.

After passing the heath, a few seedling firs creep forth to welcome the traveller, till the shadow of a small covert is gained, from whence a gate leads into a glorious fir-wood, with a formidable stile guarding its sanctity. Lonely and untrodden it is, but cool and silent, except for the scuttering rush of a rabbit, which flees before you, or a partridge, strong on the wing from a neighbouring covert. A tidy little church, used also as a school during the week, together with a few cottages, complete the clean, little village of Bushey. The Rector of Corfe, or one of his Curates, comes over on Sunday afternoons for service, and collects together a sprinkling of worshippers from far-away Greenland, Goathorn, Ower Farm, and Wych, not to speak of the Squire and his excellent mother at Rempstone, whose following principally fills the little building.

It is here at Bushey that our letters arrive, and are called for by one or other of us every day.

From Bushey, the clean, hard chalk road may be followed to Rempstone and Studland, or through narrow, tortuous lanes, like so many in Dorsetshire, where the cramped hedges take liberal toll from the great waggon-loads of ripe grain as they sweep by, up to the Corfe road. Thrift is unknown here; though the wages are so low, great heavy ears of wheat and barley strew the ditches on either side, and dangle on each hedge-spike, till the birds, more observant than man, have made a glorious feast upon the full kernels. Many shocks of corn might have been collected between Bushey and Brianscomb Farm, whither the waggon-loads were bound.

A near way to Corfe lies through the old farmstead of Brianscomb, through a deep wood, and so up to the down above; or following the usual road round the foot of Challow Hill, also brings you with less exertion into the ancient town of Corfe Castle.

MARGERY.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS.

BY MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

CHAPTER III.

It was a chilly May evening, and a bright little fire was burning in one of the two fireplaces in the long drawing-room of a country house in the north of England. There was no other light in the room as yet, and the flickering flames threw strange shadows about, and danced merrily and waveringly on walls, carpet, hardly definable furniture, and on a little figure which was seated on the fender with hands clasped round her knees, and bent head. Margery had kept herself steadily to her needlework as long as the light lasted, but, as it died away, she had let her hands fall into her lap, almost unconsciously, and had sat on, the needle still in her hand, musing. By-and-by she had slipped from her chair down on to her favourite seat, the fender; and there she had sat for the last half-hour, almost motionless, gazing into the fire. She was half-wondering, half-dreaming—wondering what the next few hours would bring her, dreaming of the life that lay before her. She was in Douglas Hollis's

house for the first time, and she was waiting for him to bring home his wife. She knew nothing of "Estelle," as Douglas had taught her to call her, beyond what she had seen on the wedding-day when she had been one of the bridesmaids. Various circumstances had prevented their meeting before, and the three months that had elapsed since then had been spent by Douglas Hollis and his wife in Egypt. She was not forming resolutions as to her new life—she had done that already—she was not thinking of the different coming home she had pictured to herself during her school days; even at the moment of her solitary arrival she had crushed down any thought of that kind. As she sat there so still, so gentle and sweet in attitude and expression, she was simply dreaming vague, endless dreams of how she would take care of Douglas Hollis's wife—and Douglas. The entrance of a servant with lamps roused her at last, and she took up her work again as he put them about the room, throwing a particularly bright light over those chairs and tables that were nearest the fire. It was a pretty room, very pretty indeed, at first sight; and it looked its best under the soft, shaded lamplight. It was narrow and rather long, with the door at one end faced by a large bow window, and an entrance to a conservatory. It was furnished in the Louis Seize style, and the quaint, straight-backed seats, with their rich brocade and inlaid woodwork, the tall palms, the lovely china, the quaint silver nicknacks, were perfect in their dainty freshness. But there was a certain air of formal correctness over the whole—the chilly newness of a room that had not yet been lived in, of a room that seemed to be waiting for a mistress. Only the radius over which the firelight danced, seemed to be warmed and brightened by something besides the hot coals and the lamp. The curly head bent over the lace pinafore which Margery was making for little Elsie Downing; the sweet, serious face, with the cheeks slightly flushed, the eyes bright and shining, a little smile every now and then curving the lips, seemed to neutralise its immediate surroundings, and make them home-like.

She had sat there for another half-hour, working with an industry which was, perhaps, a safety-valve for a certain irrepressible feeling of excitement that grew on her as time passed on, when the sudden sound of footsteps and voices in the hall, softened as they were by distance, made

her start as if their subdued murmur had been a clap of thunder.

She rose with a little cry of joy, and was going to run out of the room when, all at once, her strength seemed to leave her, and, icy cold and trembling from head to foot, she caught at the mantelpiece for support. Only for an instant though. Almost before she had time to wonder at herself it had passed again, and, as Douglas Hollis opened the door and led his wife down the room, she ran towards them with her hands outstretched, her eyes and cheeks even brighter than before.

"Welcome home, dear Estelle; Douglas, welcome home," she said.

"Thank you, little one; that's a pleasant word," replied he, as Estelle returned her kiss. "It is good to find you here to receive us; but I'm afraid your own home-coming must have been a trifle dreary. I wish it could have been managed for you to meet us in London; but it seemed impossible."

"Oh, don't trouble about that. I was all right. I've only been longing for you to come, and I'm so glad to be here to welcome home the master and mistress. I am afraid Estelle is very tired. I can begin to take care of her at once, you see; may I?" She turned to Estelle with something in her manner that was rather shy and appealing. "Will you let me?" she said, looking at her wistfully, with the eyes that were more than ever like the eyes of a collie as she spoke. "There is nothing I want so much to do."

Estelle looked at her for a moment without answering. She was a tall, slender, fair woman, very graceful in movement and pose, perfectly calm and self-possessed, and, as she looked down into the eager, sensitive face raised to hers, they presented as sharp a contrast as could be found between woman and woman. But, as she looked, something in the beseeching eyes seemed to touch Estelle. Her cold face softened, and she said, in the low, clear, beautifully-modulated voice which had helped to charm away her husband's heart:

"Take care of me? You want to take care of me?"

"Yes," said Margery. "You will let me. I mean, you will let me help Douglas?"

She put out her hand a little timidly—Estelle was so very still—and took the hand on which the wedding-ring was shining. At her soft, entreating touch the

blue eyes into which she looked changed altogether, and Estelle stooped and kissed her.

"Thank you," she said.

"That's all settled, then," said Douglas, who had looked on with a certain air of anxiety, and now spoke in a tone in which there was the faintest possible ring of relief. "Margery will have her heart's desire, now! But she is quite right, my darling; you do look dreadfully tired. Dinner is what you want. Shall we go and get ready at once?"

She turned to him as he spoke—the feeling that had touched her face for an instant gone from it again—and answered him carelessly: "Perhaps it will be best." Then, as he took from her the cloak which she had picked up from the chair, on to which she had let it fall, with a tender smile and a gesture that was almost a caress, she said merely "Thank you," with a hardly perceptible answering smile, and passed on by his side out of the room.

"Now, this is what I call jolly," exclaimed Douglas Hollis, a little later, as they seated themselves at the dinner-table.

Estelle—looking lovelier than ever, Margery thought, in her green velvet dinner-dress—made no reply, and Margery said, with a laugh:

"Which, Douglas? Dinner, your own house, or your company?"

"All three," he answered, in the same tone; "only you've put them in the wrong order. My company comes first, of course, and dinner last; but the last is by no means unimportant, as you would know, if you had had no meal to speak of since eight o'clock this morning, and had been living for three months in a comparatively uncivilised country! Well, little one," he went on, "what's the news? How are the Downings?"

"Very well, all of them, and madly excited about the wedding."

"Ah, yes; of course they would be. When is it to be, did you say?"

"Next month—the thirtieth. They have had the loveliest presents. One of Alice's aunts gave her a piano the other day, and Basil has had a drawing-room carpet and the silver, a splendid dinner-service—oh, quantities of things. The bridesmaids' frocks were the great excitement when I came away. Minnie and Alice never meet you without producing various small scraps of material for inspection and approval."

"And is it settled about Will?"

Margery coloured.

"Yes," she said, in rather a low voice. "He goes to Canada directly the wedding is over. They are so sorry about it."

Estelle had not yet spoken a word, and now, after a moment's pause, Margery turned to her and said:

"Did you find Egypt as uncivilised as Douglas seems to have done? What did you think of it?"

The question did not seem to interest Estelle, and she answered indifferently:

"I did not mind the absence of civilisation."

Neither the words nor the tone were encouraging to the growth of an infant conversation, and Margery felt disconcerted. She stole a look at Douglas. His eyes, in which she had never yet seen any deeper feeling than kindness and good temper, were fixed upon his wife with a look of longing, questioning pain, which must have risen in them suddenly, as he turned them on her, for it had certainly not been there when Margery met them the moment before. Startled, and almost disbelieving her own eyes, she turned instinctively and looked, as he was looking, at Estelle. She was sitting with one elbow on the table, her smooth, pale cheek supported on her beautiful hand, her eyes fixed on the bread which she was crumbling in the other hand. Every line of her face and figure expressed weariness and indifference. A subtle shock ran through Margery. What was it? Why did they look like that? With an instinctive desire to make a change of some kind, she said hastily and inconsequently:

"What a lovely place this is! I had no time, to-day, to explore beyond the garden; but I am longing for to-morrow, that I may go about." Unconsciously fearing the effect of another indifferent reply from Estelle, she did not actually refer to her again, but went on, addressing no one in particular. "I passed a wood on my way up from the station, that looked too tempting. Of course, you couldn't see to-night; but the ground was regularly carpeted with wild-flowers. Like fairy-land it seemed to a wretched little Cockney like me!"

As she spoke, the look that had so startled her vanished from Douglas's eyes as suddenly as it had sprung into them. He made some trivial answer, in his usual cheery, kindly manner, and the rest of the dinner-time passed away in talk of the same kind, Estelle joining in it very

seldom, and then with an absolutely uninterested tone and manner. But she was, evidently, very tired, and although Margery fancied still that there was something curiously uncertain and troubled in Douglas's attitude towards his wife, she began to persuade herself that the sudden shock she had received was the result of her imagination only. She looked at Douglas anxiously, as he sat in the full light of the lamp in the drawing-room afterwards. Estelle had gone to the piano, and was playing softly—more to herself, it seemed, than to them—and he was looking, not at her, but at the carpet at his feet. Margery was sitting a little behind him. She could see only the outline of his face; but, as she watched him, a feeling crept over her that he was changed—vaguely, undefinably, but certainly changed. Now that he was in repose, there was something about him that she had never seen before, something patient, grave, sad. As the conviction grew on her, Margery felt a sudden agonising pain shoot through her heart, as if an icy clutch had suddenly tightened round it. Something had hurt him; he was in pain—Douglas! She must do something for him; she could not bear to see him look like that. For a moment the impulse to go to him and beseech him to let her help him, was almost overwhelming, and before she had recovered herself Estelle had risen from the piano, which stood at the farther end of the room, and advanced into the brighter light in which they were sitting, and Douglas, as if roused by her movement, rose too, with the same sudden and absolute change of manner which had reassured her at dinner.

"I wonder how our neighbours will turn out?" he said, as he stood before the fire, looking tenderly at his wife. "They told me that the people at the house on the hill were nice—a mother and two sons, I think; but they are spending the summer abroad, I believe."

"That big house with the beautiful garden, do you mean?" said Margery. "It, somehow, looks as if nice people lived there."

"You ridiculous child," replied Douglas, smiling at her. "That is just like one of your fancies. 'Nasty' people are quite as likely as nice people to have their garden properly attended to, and their houses painted, and so forth, when it is necessary. And I suppose it is only the outside of Holme from which you have judged."

Margery laughed. She was quite used

to having her fancies "jeered at," as she said, and never objected to the process. But Estelle said :

"I understand what she means, perfectly well; and I also understand that it seems to you absurd."

He had turned towards her quickly, when she began to speak, and as she finished, with a slight touch of scorn in her voice, he smiled at her wistfully. She went on :

"Now, on our way to-night, we passed a cottage on the side of a hill, about half a mile away—at least it did not seem to be more than a cottage, though there was, apparently, a good deal of garden. I could only see the outline and the lights in the windows, and yet, as we went slowly by up the hill, I felt perfectly certain that nice people did not live there—that nasty people did."

"That cottage?" said her husband. "I remember. Garden Cottage they call it. It was empty when we came down to see the house; but I noticed to-night that there were lights in the window, as you say. I wonder who lives there!"

"I wonder, too," said Estelle.

It was her first expression of interest in her new home and its surroundings, and Douglas answered it with an eager gladness that seemed rather disproportionate to the occasion.

"It is very easy to find out the name, at least," he said. "The servants are sure to know. I will ring and ask."

"It is of very little consequence, after all," said Estelle; but her voice had lost the ring of indifference, and he rang the bell.

"Do you know the name of the people at Garden Cottage, James?" he asked the man who answered it. "When was it taken?"

"The gentleman came down two days ago, sir. It was left to him, I believe, by the lady as it belonged to. She never lived there herself, sir. The gentleman's name, sir? His name is—what is it now? Bailey? No, it ain't Bailey. It's not a common name, sir, and it's slipped my memory for the moment. Bazerley—that's it, sir. Bazerley."

"Bazerley!" repeated Douglas. "No, it's not a common name. Is he going to live here altogether?"

"Only for the summer, sir, they say. It's a little bit of a cottage, sir; but the grounds is lovely."

"Ah!" said Douglas. "You can go, James." Then, as the man left the room,

he added: "Well, Mr. Bazerley is our nearest neighbour for the summer, at least, so I hope your presentiment as to his character may be mistaken, Estelle."

But Estelle's interest in the subject seemed to have died out with the gratification of her momentary curiosity.

"Perhaps," she said, indifferently. "I am tired. I will go to bed, I think."

CHAPTER IV.

"It's a dreadful trial, certainly, and the worst of it is, that it is only number one!"

Margery spoke merrily. The dreadful trial in question did not apparently weigh heavily on her spirits; and Douglas Hollis, to whom she had addressed her remark, retorted, with a burlesque of indignant gloom:

"It is all very well for you, young woman; you don't appreciate its horrors now as you will to-night. You didn't see the Camdens when they called, and you are altogether in a state of blissful ignorance as to what is before you."

Breakfast was just over, and he was standing by the open window, on the low sill of which Margery had perched herself, while she scattered some crumbs on the gravel outside for the birds. The sun was streaming into the room, and through the window the green lawn, the far-off woods, and the bright blue sky made a pretty little picture, framed in the softly-moving leaves of the creeper, which grew round and peeped into the room.

They had been settled at Orchard Court for three weeks now, and the event in question was the first of a series of dinner-parties given in honour of the new-comers by the old inhabitants of the neighbourhood. It was an eminently respectable and cautious neighbourhood, and the news of the arrival of the "new people" had called forth no impulsive gush of welcome. In the opinion of the inhabitants of Hackley, it was impossible to be too careful in admitting strange people into the sacred circle of Hackley society; and, until the Orchard Court people had given satisfactory proofs of their fitness for the honour, none but the most formal advances must be made them. The heads of society had called in a stiff and stately fashion; Mrs. Douglas Hollis had, after a due interval, returned the calls, and, these preliminaries having been satisfactorily concluded, Mrs. Camden, the leader of Hackley fashion, pronounced in favour of the new-

comers, and proceeded to seal her verdict by issuing invitations for a large and solemn dinner-party, which was to give them a footing in the neighbourhood for ever after. Unfortunately, the satisfaction was all on one side. The social authorities found the Hollises "really quite nice people;" the young people, who were, strange to say, an uninfluential minority at Hackley, thought them "most charming," though both sections were a little awed by Mrs. Hollis's beauty, and her cold, unresponsive manner.

But the objects of this approbation did not in the least reciprocate it. The house was charming, the country delightful, but the people were hopelessly and undeniably dull; and it had occurred to Margery several times that she had really never before understood how much pleasant neighbours contributed to the happiness of life. She never allowed herself to wonder whether it was quite fair to lay upon their surroundings all responsibility for the fact to which she tried in vain to shut her eyes—the fact that the days passed very slowly at Orchard Court; that bed-time was watched for, and eagerly welcomed. She had taken Estelle to her faithful, affectionate heart with the kiss with which she had welcomed her home; and after that first evening, when she had been startled and distressed by a sense of indefinable pain in the atmosphere which she had expected to find one of radiant happiness and content, she had unconsciously but resolutely declined to acknowledge anything but what she had expected to find in the life about her. It was a great pity, of course, that there were no amusing people about; no families that they could possibly wish to know well; nothing whatever to look forward to in that way. Of course, Estelle was a little—well, not bored, nobody could be bored with Douglas—but just a little dull now and then. She had been used to such a bright life—people always coming in and out; dances; boating-parties; all kinds of things always going on. Oh, of course it was a change for her! It was all very well for herself, she had never been used to that kind of life, and she was always happy in the country; but it was very different for Estelle.

Estelle was still sitting at the breakfast-table, looking listlessly over her letters. She had not joined Douglas in his groanings, nor had she seconded Margery in her mock attempts at consolation. Margery

never acknowledged to herself how large a part of their conversation fell to her share; never knew how often silence would have fallen upon them but for her always bright and ready chatter; never even suspected that when Estelle was drawn for a moment into their talk it was by her influence alone. Estelle was quiet, and she was a chatterbox, and Douglas—but when Margery found herself watching or thinking of Douglas now, she always stopped herself and turned to something else.

She finished sprinkling her crumbs in spite of Douglas's assurances that it was merely pauperising the birds to feed them in the summer, and then returned to the subject of the dinner.

"I wonder whether we shall meet the new-comer, Mr. Bazerley? I wonder whether he finds Hackley society as heavy as we do? It would be consoling to compare notes. It is strange that we have never met him about, living so near. Don't you think so, Estelle?"

Estelle raised her head wearily.

"Don't I think what, dear?" she said. "I didn't hear." She rose as she spoke, and, walking to the other window, stood there looking out, while she said: "I think it was a great mistake to come and live in the country."

Before Margery could utter the laughing rejoinder with which she was always ready, Douglas had walked up to his wife and, putting his hand very gently on hers, said: "Would you be happier in town, Estelle? It was your wish, when—at Ventnor—that we should live in the country. You told me you were tired of society life."

She did not move. The hand he held lay perfectly passive and irresponsive in his hold, and she answered, listlessly:

"Was it? Yes, I dare say. I've changed my mind, I suppose."

"Shall we go to London in the winter—or, abroad? Or would you like to go away at once? What would you like, Estelle? Tell me!"

His fingers tightened round the passive hand he held, and she disengaged them as he finished, and drew a little away as she said:

"I really have very little feeling on the subject. We may as well pass the summer here, I suppose."

Margery had turned her head away, and she did not see the look of reproachful longing and the gesture of uncomprehend-

ing pain with which Douglas Hollis turned away. But the silence which followed struck her as peculiar, and with the dislike to such silences which had become instinctive with her during the last three weeks, she slipped off her seat on the window-ledge, and said:

"Shall we go out, Estelle? It is a shame to waste this lovely morning. If Douglas's dreary forebodings are to be realised to-night, we may as well prepare ourselves for the ordeal by a nice day."

Margery had several times felt, not without wonder at herself for the feeling, that those morning walks with Estelle were the easiest part of the day. She never asked herself the reason—she had taken to evading such questions lately—but she vaguely felt that though Estelle was not less quiet and passive at those times, they were a pleasure to her, too. They had explored a great part of the neighbourhood together, riding or driving in a desultory, discursive manner, and now Margery proposed that they should drive to a place called Offley Moor, from which they had been told there was a remarkably fine view. The day was glorious, and, as they drove along the winding, undulating roads, it seemed to Margery's town-bred eyes that it would be difficult to surpass the views that met them at every turn—little wooded nooks, sheltering murmuring streams; broad meadows, stretching up and down, divided by low hedges, and stone walls; with here and there a quaint little village buried in a valley, or climbing up the hillside, with its stone cottages, its winding, hilly street, and its rough little church. But when a sudden turn in the road brought before them the view of which they had heard so much, she gave a little cry, and bent forward with clasped hands and parted lips. Her first impression was that she had never understood before what space was—that she had never been able to breathe before then. From where the carriage stood the land sloped downwards abruptly for some fifty feet, and then stretched away in front and on the right hand in what seemed to her an endless expanse of undulating meadow, wood, and water. A sudden turn of the road on their left, by which a rough green slope shut out the country on that side, seemed only to emphasize the vast sweep of the rest; and, as she looked, there came to Margery the sense that comes at times to all to whom Nature really appeals, though they may

never see her at her grandest and most impressive—the sense of the utter insignificance of those troubles that originate in the falseness and artificiality of life—the sense of a power and purpose above anything that we can see—the sense of rest and confidence in that power. She was so absorbed as she sat there, her eyes shining, her lips quivering a very little, that she did not hear the footsteps of a man who was coming up the road behind them, and she turned with a violent start as a voice from the other side of the carriage said suddenly:

"Miss Humpherys! What an utterly unexpected pleasure!"

Estelle had been sitting by her side, graceful and quiet as usual, her eyes resting with a softer expression than they often wore, not on the view, but on the absorbed little face by her side. At the sound of the voice the slightest possible start ran through her; a faint flush rose in her pale, calm face; and turning slowly towards it she said, with an accent of extreme surprise, but holding out her hand with the most perfect self-possession:

"Mr. Seldon! How do you do."

He was a tall man, with a handsome, clever face, which nevertheless struck Margery as not being exactly pleasant. The mouth was hidden by a falling moustache; but the expression of the rather hard grey eyes was cynical, and ever mocking. His attitude as he stood there was very easy and graceful, and he looked like a man accustomed to command attention and respect.

"Are you staying in this neighbourhood?" he continued. "It is a long time since we met, Miss Humpherys, and I hope you will not drive away now without giving me some hope that our acquaintance may be renewed? I need not tell you how pleasant the remembrance of it has been to me——"

He paused, and Estelle said, with a slight smile, and a little deprecating movement of one of her hands:

"I live at Hackley, about eight miles away. If you are staying within reach, I shall be glad if you will call. It is Miss Humpherys no longer, Mr. Seldon—I am married."

"Married!" he echoed. "Married! Is it too late for me to offer my congratulations? And may I not know your name?"

"I am Mrs. Douglas Hollis," she answered. "Here is my card. Do come and see me if you can; society at Hackley

is rather slow. I suppose you are only in the neighbourhood for a short time?"

He took the card she gave him, glanced at it, and then raised his eyes again to her face. The listlessness of her attitude and manner had gradually left her, and its presence and disappearance had both been marked by the keen eyes of the man before her.

"Yes," he answered, "I shall hope to see you again. I have heard something of Hackley. You must find it tiresome, I'm afraid."

"Tiresome!" she repeated, with a ring of amusement in her voice—and Margery felt as if the Estelle who spoke was a total stranger to her. "Tiresome! They are appalling. We go to-night to a dinner-party, the very thought of which makes me shudder. Oh, if you knew how they bore me!"

"Oh," he said, with another slight smile, "a country dinner-party! Well, Mrs. Hollis, I can only hope it may turn out better than you expect. But I am keeping you. I will wish you good-bye now, in the hope that it may not be so long before we meet again. Au revoir!" He shook the hand she held out to him again, lifted his hat, and walked quickly away along the road.

"Who is it, Estelle?" asked Margery, as he disappeared.

Estelle had sat quite still, watching the receding figure, and, as Margery spoke, she started as if she had forgotten her presence. The colour faded from her cheeks, her manner changed from its bright attention to its ordinary passivity, and she answered in her usual uninterested tone:

"He is a man I knew some years ago—a Mr. Seldon. I had lost sight of him."

There was a short silence, and then Margery said:

"I had no idea you minded the dinner-party really so much, Estelle. I am so sorry."

"Mind it!" said Estelle; and for the first time Margery heard her calm, beautiful voice sharpened by irritability. "Of course I mind it, and now I mind it more. I had begun to forget the people among whom I used to live."

There was no answer. Margery did not understand why it should hurt her so much that Estelle should speak like that; but at the moment she felt it impossible to reply. They drove home almost in silence, and all the rest of the day she tried to persuade herself that it was only to her fancy that Estelle was different in

manner—restless, irritable, absolutely discontented.

The sense of weariness produced in her by this new element of discord, to which she tried in vain to blind herself, so wore on Margery's spirits that, by the time she followed Estelle into Mrs. Camden's drawing-room in the evening, her anticipations were as gloomy as it was possible for them to be. Her first view of the stiff, formal drawing-room, and its equally unprepossessing inmates, did not tend to reassure her; nor did the first few moments during which she was wholly occupied with solemn introductions.

When these were over, and the silence of the shy young man who was to take her in to dinner allowed her a moment's breathing space, she stole a glance at her fellow sufferers. Douglas was standing beside a portly and imposing country magnate, looking decidedly rueful. Estelle was listening to the pompous platitudes of her host, the disdainful calm of her lovely face still disturbed by that new look of active discontent. But even as Margery looked at her, her expression changed suddenly and completely. A soft pink colour flushed into her cheeks, a look of glad surprise sprang into her eyes, her whole face seemed to wake up.

For a moment Margery could see nothing to account for such a change; then, to her inexpressible surprise, she saw the man who had spoken to her on Offley Moor advancing with Mrs. Camden to Estelle's side.

"Mrs. Hollis," Mrs. Camden said, "may I introduce your nearest neighbour—like yourself, a new comer—Mr. Bazerley?"

For a moment, Margery thought she must have been mistaken. Estelle had called him Mr. Seldon. Then she heard her say in the same awakened voice that she had heard for the first time that morning:

"What is the meaning of this, Mr. Seldon? Why do you spring mines on one in this way? Explain yourself, if you please."

"Willingly, and most easily," he answered. "I have inherited a little property, and a new name with it. As Mrs. Camden has told you, I am now Stephen Bazerley of Garden Cottage, and your nearest neighbour. May I hope that you will not think the worse of Hackley society on that account?"